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Si Slocum's Country Store

Frank Dumont

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Si Slocum's Country --- Store

An Entertainment in One Act

BY

FRANK DUMONT

Author of "SMITH vs. SMYTHE," "THE OLD NEW
HAMPSHIRE HOME," etc.



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No. 1

Wm. C. C.

Si Slocum's Country Store

CAST OF CHARACTERS

SI SLOCUM . . .	<i>Postmaster at Cranberry Crossroads, justice of the peace, insurance agent and owner of the store</i>
HANK HARDBACK } JOE SPRUCE }	<i>Two old veterans and loungers</i>
REUBEN JAYBIRD	<i>An up-to-date farmer</i>
JIM SNOW	<i>His negro farm boy</i>
SLOWBOY	<i>Who can sleep anywhere</i>
THE TRAMP	<i>A bird of passage</i>
EZRA BUTTONS	<i>A college athlete</i>
HIRAM PLUNKITT	<i>The country scapegrace turned actor</i>
PROFESSOR CAMOMILE	<i>A cow doctor</i>
THE TOWN CONSTABLE.	
TILLY SLOCUM	<i>Assistant postmistress</i>
MRS. RIPPLES	<i>A designing widow</i>
LILLIE DOTTS	<i>A typewriter girl</i>
BELINDA STOKES	<i>An old maid, and a general busybody</i>
MABEL DEERING	<i>A summer boarder</i>
SCHOOLGIRLS	

TIME OF PLAYING :—One hour.

STORY OF THE ENTERTAINMENT

Si Slocum is the proprietor of the crossroads store, and Tilly, his sister, is postmistress. Hank and Joe, two old veterans, sit on boxes and quarrel about the war. Snow, who is black, and Slowboy, who is sleepy, upset the potatoes. Tilly reads all the postal cards, learns about Farmer Jaybird's new auto, about the church entertainment and about the return to Greenville of Hiram Plunkitt. "Guess Hi's goin' to live on the old folks now."

Slowboy takes a nap while waiting for his molasses. "That boy would go to sleep on top of a steeple." Mrs. Ripples, the giddy widow, gives her views of matrimony. She warmly welcomes Hiram. A burlesque love scene. "What do you work at, Hiram?" "I'm an actor." "I allus said you'd come to a bad end."

Lillie, Hiram's old sweetheart, offers to help him. Belinda Spokes tells of the coming entertainment. Everybody volunteers. Tilly shows how to speak a piece. Belinda does a real sweet imitation of a little child. Ezra Buttons, the athlete, offers a college song if Mabel will help. Mabel is willing. The high school girls, Professor Camomile, the cow doctor, and others all show what they can do. Ezra recognizes Hiram as a brilliant Broadway star. Lillie and Hiram. "Oh, Hiram, I thought you were poor." "No, I'm rich—I have you!"

COSTUMES, AGES, ETC.

The costumes for the rural characters may be quiet and natural country costumes, or they may, if desired, be strongly burlesqued.

SI is fifty to sixty years old, tall and angular. Wears overalls, long apron, a cotton shirt, and, if desired, a wide straw hat. Wears spectacles. May have "chin whiskers."

HANK and JOE are both over seventy, and dress much like Si. Their shirts are of loud colors, and not the same color. One wears thin whiskers, the other has a smooth face. Joe has a cane, and limps.

JAYBIRD. About forty. Wears khaki trousers, has a white shirt and collar, an automobile duster, goggles, and eccentric motor costume generally.

SNOW and SLOWBOY wear overalls and should be typical poor country boys. Slowboy stutters.

TRAMP is ragged, with short beard. Wears old cap.

EZRA. About twenty, a typical college boy. He should be a big chap.

HIRAM. About thirty. Well but quietly dressed. Summer suit and straw hat.

PROFESSOR. About fifty. Wide-brimmed black felt hat, rusty long black coat, and black trousers. Wears spectacles and carries black hand-bag and is very near-sighted.

CONSTABLE. Cotton shirt, overalls, large tin star. Uniform cap with visor. Carries baton.

TILLY. About fifty. Calico dress, rather short in the skirt. White stockings and heavy shoes.

MRS. RIPPLES. About forty. Should be attractive, and dressed in a white summer costume, obviously too young for her, with gay ribbons, coquettish bows, etc.

LILLIE. About twenty-seven. Quietly and prettily dressed in simple summer costume. Wears hat.

BELINDA. About sixty. A gray curl in front of each ear. Spectacles, old-fashioned dress.

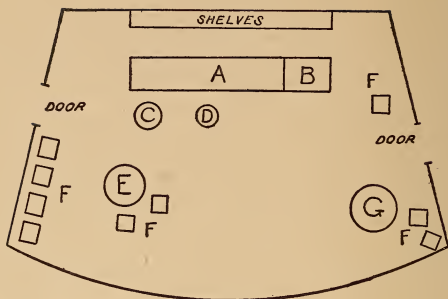
MABEL. About twenty. Fashionably dressed in summer costume, hat, parasol, etc.

SCHOOLGIRLS. Fifteen to eighteen years old. Simple summer dresses.

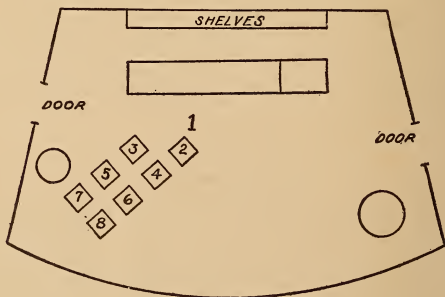
PROPERTIES

For Si, packages, scoop. For Tilly, letters and postcards. For Snow, barrel partly filled with potatoes, cracker box, bridle. For Hank, knife, stick, crackers. For Joe, cane, corn-cob pipe, crackers. For Slowboy, pitcher. For Jaybird, auto horn, monkey-wrench. For Tramp, long flexible stick. For Hiram, sheet of paper.

SCENE PLOT



SCENE.--Interior of Si Slocum's store. Entrances R. and L. Shelves against flat up c. A, counter. B, post-office boxes. C, bundle of brooms. D, a keg. E, large empty barrel. FF, boxes to serve as seats. G, barrel of potatoes.



This diagram shows arrangement of boxes to form the burlesque "sight-seeing automobile." 1, Hiram. 2, Jay-bird. 3, Lillie. 4, Mabel. 5, Hank. 6, Joe. 7, Belinda. 8, Si.

Si Slocum's Country Store

SCENE.—*Interior of the store. Doors R. and L. Shelves across back show miscellaneous dry-goods, cracker boxes, jars of candy, straw hats, flour bags, canned goods, etc., etc. Counter across back, in front of shelves, is also heaped with rolls of dry-goods, cheese box, scales, small kegs, etc. This counter may be made by placing boards across boxes, and draping the front with dark cloth, or cloth painted like wooden panels. At the left end of counter is a set of post-office pigeonholes, or something painted to look like them, with a sign over them: "U. S. Post-office." At back and sides of room are signs advertising goods, and placards advertising county fairs, public sales, etc. Also signs, "Fire Insurance," "Justice of the Peace," "Cemetery Lots for Sale," etc.*

(*Lively music at opening. SI SLOCUM is behind counter tying up a package and weighing articles. TILLY SLOCUM at work behind post-office boxes, sorting mail. Loud, angry voices heard R.*)

SI (*pausing*). My! My! I'll bet ye them boys is fightin' again.

TILLY (*from behind boxes*). Fightin' again? Fightin' yet, ye mean. They ain't never stopped. Oh, my gracious!

(*She screams as JIM SNOW rushes in R., pursued by SLOWBOY. SNOW picks up a paper cracker box from counter and throws it at SLOWBOY.*)

SNOW. Lemme alone. Lemme alone. I ain't doin' nuffin. Lemme alone, I tell yer.

(*He runs behind barrel of potatoes down L. SLOWBOY slowly follows, and in dodging around the barrel they upset it. SNOW rushes over to R., pursued by SLOWBOY, and SNOW upsets bundle of brooms at right end of counter. SNOW falls and sits on floor.*)

SLOWBOY. Now I've got yer.

(*He seizes empty barrel standing down R., and puts it over SNOW's head and runs out L. All this action should be very quick. Si looks on amazed.*)

TILLY. Oh, stop 'em, stop 'em, Si Slocum. Why don't you do somethin'? (*She rushes out in front of counter, her hands full of letters. Tries to pick up brooms and drops her letters.*) Now! There's all my letters on the floor. I call it a disgrace the way you let them boys go on. Oh, if I was a man!

(*She is gathering letters, but drops them again when SNOW gives a yell and jumps the barrel toward her.*)

SNOW. Lemme out! Lemme out!

(*TILLY screams and rushes behind counter, and pushes Si out in front of it.*)

TILLY. Si Slocum, you get out there and stop this. That there barrel jumped at me an' tried to bite me.

Si (*going to barrel*). Dear me, Tilly, ye don't say? (*Laughs and lifts barrel.*) Get out o' here, ye young imp o' Satan.

(*SNOW yells, just escapes Si's kick, and runs out R. Si puts barrel down R. Music ceases.*)

TILLY (*coming around right end of counter*). Pretty doings, I say. How long ye goin' to stand this, Silas Slocum? Oh, if I was a man!

Si. What would ye do if ye was a man, Tilly?

(*Picks up brooms.*)

TILLY. I'd call a constable an' put them boys in jail.

Si (*picking up potatoes with scoop*). What for?

TILLY. Interferin' with the United States mail—that's what for. Look there! (*Points to letters.*)

Si. Who interferes most with the mail, Tilly—the person that knocks it on the floor, or the one that reads it all before people gets it? (*Laughs and winks.*)

TILLY (*picking up letters*). Humph! I s'pose you mean me. Well, I guess I know my rights. If I get a little fun out of this job I guess it's all I do get. Oh, I wish I was a man.

(*Goes behind counter and begins to sort letters on counter.*)

SI. I wish ye was, Tilly. I'd certainly get ye after them boys.

(*Picks up potatoes with a scoop. As he does so, HANK HARDBACK and JOE SPRUCE enter R., HANK whittling a stick. JOE is smoking a corn-cob pipe. They seat themselves down R., on soap boxes or kegs.*)

HANK. Hello, Si, did a bombshell hit the place?

JOE. Looks like war around here, for sure.

TILLY (*looking up*). I wish you'd stop smoking when ladies are present.

JOE. I buy my tobacco here, and I guess I can smoke it here, can't I, Slocum? 'Tain't woman's rights around these corners yet, thank heaven!

HANK. The day when they have a woman president of these United States I'll move to Europe.

TILLY. The sooner the quicker, I say. (*Reads postal.*) Oh, my goodness, here's a postal to Hiram Plunkitt, care of his father.

JOE. Ye don't mean William Plunkitt's Hiram?

TILLY. Yes, I do. This card's from New York, and from the way it reads I sh'd say he's stayin' to home now.

SI. Well, well. Why, he's been gone five years.

HANK. Six, come Christmas.

JOE. Used to be kinder sweet on Lillie Dotts, didn't he?

SI. Yes. They say he went off to New York to make a fortune, an' she promised to wait for him.

TILLY. Well, she's still a-waitin'. An' I guess she'll wait a good long while before Hiram Plunkitt comes back rich. He was always a lazy good-fer-nothin' feller. Why, this post-card says —

SI. Tilly, you ain't got no right to read other people's post-cards.

TILLY. Well, if people don't want their post-cards read, why don't they write letters? Humph! (*Sorts mail.*) Guess I'll read 'em all if I want, an' learn the news.

SI. Don't seem to me ye learn much.

TILLY. Don't I? Well, I'll tell ye what I learned to-day. That brazen Mrs. Ripples is settin' her cap for another man. Lillie Dotts is goin' to work as a typewriter in Lawyer

Brown's office. Reuben Jaybird's got a new automobile, and it ain't all paid for.

SI. Ye don't say, Tilly?

TILLY. Yes, sir, that's what I know by reading post-cards. I'm ahead of that gossip, Belinda Spokes. I know there's going to be an entertainment given, too. It's to get funds to send the minister away for a little vacation.

SI. Don't be such a busybody, Tilly.

HANK. There's a heap of busybodies in Cranberry Crossroads.

TILLY. And you're one of them—but you can't get ahead of me. Put that in your pipe and smoke it!

(Flounces out L. JOE laughs at HANK.)

HANK. Well, I don't mind her! A man like me that's been all through the war can stand a woman's tongue.

JOE. Let up on that war talk. You were never near the front.

HANK. Everybody knows I was wounded.

JOE. Yes, you were kicked by a commissary mule.

(Both get up to fight. SI comes between them.)

SI. Here boys, boys—I won't have any fighting in my store or upon the premises of the United States which I represent as postmaster. Besides, I'm justice of the peace, and would have to fine you for disorderly conduct.

HANK *(pointing to JOE)*. He's always picking on to my war record.

JOE. He's always blowing about battles that he never saw and nobody ever heard of.

SI. Sit down, both of you!

(JOE sits down grumbling. HANK helps himself to crackers from box on counter. Both he and JOE do this several times during the entertainment.)

(Enter TRAMP, L.)

TRAMP. Can you gentlemen tell me which is the other side of the road?

SI *(laughing)*. The other side is the opposite side, of course.

TRAMP. A man across the way said this was the other side.

SI. Why don't you try to find work?

TRAMP. I did find work for two of my family, but they wouldn't take it.

SI. Well—get a move on you. I don't want any tramps around here.

TRAMP. Why? Have you got enough of 'em now?

SI. You get out of here. (*About to throw something at TRAMP, who runs out door R., as enter SLOWBOY, L., with a pitcher.*) So you're back here again, are you? You upset that barrel of potatoes, and I'll wring your neck for you.

SLOWBOY (*stuttering*). It—wasn't me. It was Snow.

SI. I want you both to keep out of here. What do you want, anyway?

SLOWBOY. W-w-want—some—molasses.

SI. How much?

SLOWBOY. T-t-t-ten—cents' worth; going to have—griddle cakes to-morrow morning.

SI. Well, you keep awake while I get it for you. (*Takes pitcher.*) That boy would go to sleep on top of a steeple.

(*Goes out R. SLOWBOY sits on a keg near counter and falls asleep. TILLY comes from L.*)

TILLY (*calling off R.*). Si, here's a postal I can't make out. Come here and read it to me!

SI (*heard off R.*). I can't! I'm busy just now.

TILLY. I want to know all about it. Come here, I say.

(*SI comes out—molasses on hands. Takes post-card.*)

SI. Why, it's only an advertisement for face powder, for Belinda Stokes.

TILLY. I knew it. I knew she painted. Oh! Won't I tell everybody! The deceitful old thing! Face powder! Well, I never! (*Business. Takes card from SI.*) You've got molasses stuck all over this card.

SI. Well, I can't help it. I can't 'tend to business and be a dude at the same time.

TILLY. Well, I'll leave the molasses right on the card. She paints her face! Goodness knows her face needs whitewashing! And I've a good mind to hint it to the min-

ister. (*Exit SI, R.*) The idea of her being connected with that entertainment next week! Oh! Oh! (*Sees SLOWBOY sleeping.*) Here! This isn't a lodging house. Wake up!

(*Pushes him off the keg and exits L. SLOWBOY gets up, sits on the keg, and goes to sleep again. SI enters R., and goes to SLOWBOY with the pitcher.*)

SI. Here's your molasses. Now run home! I'll charge it to your mother.

(*Gives pitcher to SLOWBOY and goes behind counter. SLOWBOY takes pitcher and goes to sleep. All through the scene he rises now and then to go home, but never gets to the door.*)

(*Enter SNOW, R., with a horse's bridle.*)

SNOW. Somebody run into me! (*Stands at door shouting off R.*) Look out who you is running into, mister man!

SI. You upset all my merchandise, you black rascal, and I'll tan your hide for you. (*Takes broom.*)

SNOW. Hold on, boss! I admit the altercation, but I ain't de aggressor. I didn't mean no harm to your mercantile ingredients. That stuttering boy picked a dispute with me and I had to amalgamate his disposition.

SI. Well, what do you want?

SNOW. Mr. Jaybird sent this bridle down to be fixed (*giving it*) and he wants some nails.

SI. Tenpenny nails?

SNOW. No, not ten pennies. Just five cents' worth! And he wants some axle grease—the kind you sell for butter.

(*HANK and JOE laugh at SI.*)

HANK. All right, boy, he knows the article.

SNOW. And he wants a couple of gallons of kerosene gasoline oil. We've got a new buzz-wagon and cain't run her without oil.

SI. All the better for me. Automobiles bring a demand for gasoline.

SNOW. Hmf! Dey bring de sheriff if you don't pay up. I'll stop in for the stuff when I comes back from the barber shop. The barber is sharpening my razor. I'm going to a

party to-morrow night, and I want to be real well dressed. (*About to exit door R., just as JAYBIRD enters R. JAYBIRD has large goggles, cap, coat, etc., of eccentric motorist. SNOW is alarmed as he meets him.*) Oh! What's dis? Oh! Don't hurt me! Please don't hurt me!

(*Runs out L., in fright. Men in store alarmed also.*)

JAYBIRD. Hello, folks. Don't be alarmed. It's me—Jaybird. Just put on my new togs to see how they would fit. Got my new automobile in and going out for a nice ride.

SI. What do you know about an automobile, Reuben?

JAYBIRD (*with appropriate gestures*). Why, I know all about it. I been takin' a course in a correspondence school. It's easy. First ye fill yer tank with oil. Then ye open the radiator, pour in your gasoline, and stop up the hole in the top with the spark-plug. Then ye shut off the air, turn on the compression, set the throttle open six notches, advance the clutch, release the magneto, grab the crank shaft with both hands and give her a quick turn—and then ye jump in and take hold of the steerin' knuckle, and give three honk-honks like this (*sounding horn he has in pocket*), an' off ye go.

JOE. Sho! Sounds easy, startin'.

JAYBIRD. Yes, it's easy startin'. But ye stop awful hard. Unless ye're real expert, like me, the first thing ye know the auto's straddlin' one limb, and ye're hung on another, an' neither of ye nigh the ground. Oh, it's only real experts can run the dinged things.

HANK. How long ye had her, Reuben?

JAYBIRD. Oh, I had her nearly two days now, an' she's only cost me fifty-seven ninety-three for repairs, so far. Say, hurry Snow up with the gasoline, Si.

SI. How'd ye come to buy the machine, Reuben? Heard ye say t'other day ye was savin' up to put a coat o' paint on the house and barn.

JAYBIRD. Oh, I decided to put a mortgage on 'em, instead. I'll be down to take ye all for a ride soon.

(*Enter TILLY, L., with post-cards.*)

TILLY. Two post-cards for you. (*Gives them to JAYBIRD.*) How's the new automobile? A lawyer's coming up with the mortgage papers.

JAYBIRD. Well, how do you know?

TILLY. Say, what am I in the post-office for? To keep posted, of course.

(*Exit, R.*)

SI. Don't mind her. She's got to keep up with Belinda Spokes somehow.

JAYBIRD. Oh, I don't mind Tilly. The only woman I'm afraid of around here is Mrs. Ripples—Jee-rusalem, here she comes!

(*Rushes out R., sounding auto horn, as MRS. RIPPLES enters L.*)

MRS. R. (*rushing across and looking off R.*) Oh, ain't that too bad? There goes Reuben Jaybird, and I wanted to have a few words with him. Howdy do, folks?

(*The men all greet her.*)

SI. Howdy do, Mrs. Ripples?

(*Enter TILLY, L.*)

TILLY. There's no mail for you. Guess there never will be no males for you, Mrs. Ripples.

MRS. R. Well, upon my word. I want you to know that three of the finest gentlemen in this——

TILLY (*interrupting*). Well, now you've had three husbands, I should think you'd give somebody else a chance.

MRS. R. I'm not interested in anybody else's chances. I'm going to get a husband, but I'm going to be particular this time. I don't want them dying on my hands all the time. It keeps me dressing in black and having expensive funerals. The next fellow has got to promise me that he'll live five or six years, at the least.

HANK. Take me. I've got a pension—and a war record.

MRS. R. Oh, no! I don't want to be an old man's nurse. My next husband must own an automobile and have a big insurance on his life.

SI. That's right. The two go together.

JOE. How would I suit?

MRS. R. Oh, you get out! I've got no use for old wrecks.

TILLY. Your husbands were glad to die, I guess.

MRS. R. Well, some women try and try, and never get any.

TILLY. Well, that don't hit me. I wouldn't marry the best man that ever lived.

HANK. I haven't asked you yet!

(TRAMP *sneaks in R. with long stick and hides in the barrel, R.*)

TILLY (to HANK). I want you to mind your own business about me.

(*Exit, R.*)

(TRAMP *hits JOE on the head.*)

JOE (to HANK). And don't you put your hands on me.

HANK. Haven't touched you. (TRAMP *strikes HANK, who jumps up.*) Here! That means fight! I don't allow any man to hit me on the head, where I was wounded by a cannon-ball.

JOE. I didn't hit you. And don't you hit me, neither.

(TRAMP *hits them both rapidly. They clinch. SI runs and separates them. TRAMP watches his chance and hits SI, who turns and shakes and strikes both of the old men. SI then seizes each of them and runs them out of the store, L., and returns angry and puffing and falls over the sleeping boy.*)

SI. By ginger! You get out of my way and go home!

(SLOWBOY *walks a few steps, comes back and sits down and falls asleep again. Meanwhile HIRAM PLUNKITT is heard outside spouting like a tragedian.*)

HIRAM. Make way for me! Call out the village brass band and fire company and yell with all your might, "Welcome to our city!" (*Enter HIRAM, L., and poses.*) Hello, folks!

MRS. R. Hiram Plunkitt, I heard you were back. Welcome home! (*Runs to him.*)

HIRAM (*striking attitude*). Ah, fairest of the fair! This must be Miss Susy Snodgrass, the village belle; or, no, stay, I mean Mrs. Dobbs; or, no—Mrs. Smith—no, Mrs. Ripples!

SI. Now ye got her up to date, Hiram.

MRS. R. (*going close to HIRAM*). Ah, Hiram, you've been gone a long time!

(*Sighs and looks at him languishingly.*)

HIRAM. Too long, fair one. Ah, angels were painted fair to look like thee! (*Puts his arm around her.*)

MRS. R. Oh, Hiram, I hope you are going to stay here. You do make love so naturally.

HIRAM. None knew thee but to love thee.

HANK. An' most of 'em married her, Hiram.

MRS. R. Don't you believe it, Hiram. I've had only three, so far.

SI. My, you two are as good as a play.

(*MRS. R. laughs and leaves HIRAM.*)

HIRAM (*with burlesque tenderness*). A play! Ah, this is real affection's truest note. Soft! What light from yon window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. Arise, fair moon!

MRS. R. (*giggling*). Am I the moon?

HIRAM. Yes. Oh, would that I were a rose to press that cheek! A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Come to my arms, Juliet! I love thee, and none shall take you from me. Mine! Mine! (*Rushes to her and embraces her.*) Thus Romeo has won his Juliet.

(*Business of mock kisses. All applaud, and HIRAM and MRS. R. separate, laughing.*)

MRS. R. Hiram, you must come and see me.

HIRAM. At the old place? Ah, Mrs. Ripples, when I was a mere child I used to walk past there and wonder when I'd be old enough to marry you.

MRS. R. (*bridling*). I'm not so much older than you, Hiram!

HIRAM. No, but I dare not aspire to your hand yet, Mrs. Ripples. Wait till I have more experience. I'm saving you for my third wife.

MRS. R. The idea! Well, I see you're the same old Hiram.

SI. What are ye workin' at, Hiram?

HIRAM. I'm an actor.

SI. Ye don't say! Well, I always said ye'd come to a bad end.

(They all laugh, and HIRAM joins in.)

(Enter TILLY, R., followed cautiously by HANK and JOE.)

TILLY. Land sakes, if 'tain't Hiram Plunkitt!

(Goes to him, and they shake hands.)

HIRAM. Hello, Miss Tilly. Still on the job, I see.

TILLY. Well, stickin' at a job is more'n some folks can do. *(Enter LILLIE DOTTS, L.)* I s'pose ye've come back now to live on the old folks, same as ye used to.

HIRAM *(smiling)*. Well, it's a mighty comfortable place to get back to, Miss Tilly.

TILLY. Well, it's lucky they're able to take care of you.

HIRAM. That's so, Miss Tilly.

TILLY. I always said you was shiftless. I s'pose ye haven't steady work now, have ye?

HIRAM *(smiling)*. No, I can't say I have. But I intend to be working in the fall.

TILLY *(sniffing)*. Well, ye know what place is paved with good intentions.

HIRAM. I've heard of it.

(Auto horn heard off L.)

SI. By gravy! There's Jaybird in his new machine, I bet. Let's see him.

(SI, TILLY, HANK, JOE and MRS. R. all rush out L. SLOW-BOY is still asleep on keg. HIRAM turns and sees LILLIE up L.)

HIRAM. Lillie!

LILLIE. Hiram! *(Comes down c.)* So you've come back.

HIRAM *(taking her hand)*. Yes. Are you glad to see me, Lillie?

LILLIE. You know I am.

HIRAM. You know I told you I wouldn't come back poor, Lillie. I——

LILLIE *(interrupting)*. Oh, don't, Hiram. I heard what you told Tilly. You are still poor—and you have not found your life-work.

HIRAM. Lillie, I want to tell you —

LILLIE. Wait. Let me say this first. I've saved something, and the old place is mine now. Let me help you make a fresh start. All I have is yours.

HIRAM (*going to her, and taking her hands*). Lillie, you dear girl—you dear little girl! Bless you. There's only one thing I want, and that is —

(*Voices heard L. and loud crash.*)

LILLIE (*looking around L.*). Oh, they are all coming back!

(HIRAM and LILLIE *separate hastily.*)

(*Enter SI, HANK, JOE and TILLY, L., followed by MRS. R., who looks off L. All laughing except MRS. R.*)

SI. Well, well, Jaybird's done it this time.

HANK (*laughing*). Thought the road ran up the side of the barn, I guess.

JOE. Reckon Reuben'll have to put on a second mortgage now. (*All laugh but MRS. R.*)

MRS. R. Well, I think it's a shame. He's such a nice man, too. (*Enter JAYBIRD, L., with clothes dirty and mussed. Carries a large monkey-wrench.*) I'm awful sorry, Mr. Jaybird.

JAYBIRD. Oh, I reckon the mortgage 'll cover it. Say, Si, I don't need that extr'y gasoline just yet.

(*MRS. R. goes to JAYBIRD.*)

HANK. My, she stopped quick. Guess it takes an expert like you, Reuben, to stop that way, all in one place.

(*All laugh.*)

(*Enter BELINDA SPOKES, L.*)

BELINDA. Hello, everybody! Glad to find so many here. I'm lovin' everybody to-day. (*HANK, JOE and SI rush to her and embrace her. BELINDA pushes them away.*) Go on with ye! I should think you old men would be ashamed. My gracious, 'tain't safe for a girl to go around alone, nowadays. You ought to be thinkin' of your hereafter. Hello, Lillie! What nice clothes you got. Look real cheap, too. Who's that young man?

(*Points to HIRAM.*)

HIRAM. Why, don't you remember me, Miss Spokes? I'm Hiram Plunkitt.

BELINDA. What! The young man Lillie was sweet on? Well, well, I thought you was in jail, or somethin'. What do you do for a livin'?

SI. Well, Miss Spokes, Hiram says he's an actor.

BELINDA. Then he's just what I'm lookin' for. We're gettin' up an entertainment in the town hall to send the minister on a vacation. I want you all to help. Ain't that news, now?

TILLY (*sourly*). Not much. I told 'em before you came in. Here's some post-cards for you. Ain't nothin' but face-powder advertisements, but I guess ye'd like to have 'em.

BELINDA. Well, I declare. They are all stuck over with molasses. How shocking!

TILLY. Not half so shocking as painting your face when you're old enough to know better.

BELINDA. You mind your own business, and stop reading my postal cards, or there'll be war here.

HANK. War! That's me! Let me tell you about the battles I fit and died in —

JOE (*with cane*). Not another word about those battles. (TRAMP *hits HANK on the head and he falls on the box.*) He's so feeble he can't stand up, and he talks about getting married.

(TRAMP *hits JOE on the head, who falls in funny manner.*
TRAMP *hides in barrel.*)

BELINDA. Let them both die if they want to.

LILLIE. Tell us about the entertainment.

BELINDA. It comes off next week. I'm around hustling up some talent. Everybody has got to do something. Contribute or perform in some way.

LILLIE. I'll volunteer to do something.

(LILLIE *may introduce specialty.*)

HIRAM (*as she finishes amid applause*). That's fine, Lillie. And I—I will appear in a comedy written by myself, called Hiram Plunkitt's Courtship, and I'll get a lady to act

the other part—so naturally that love will permeate the entire building.

BELINDA. } Oh, let me act it with you !
MRS. R. }

HIRAM. One at a time, ladies. Don't all speak at once. There are other applicants, also. (*Glances at LILLIE, who smiles.*) My love-making will be the real thing this time. How are you going to help the entertainment, Mr. Slocum?

SI. Me? Oh, I'll contribute ice-cream and crackers, I guess.

TILLY. Yes, if those loafers leave any. (*Glares at JOE and HANK.*) Well, I'm goin' to speak a piece I learned in school.

(*TILLY recites a child's piece or sings childish song in cracked voice. When all are applauding TRAMP rises up and yells "Good," and applauds louder than the rest. SI goes to him, takes him by the ear, and brings him down.*)

SI. Who are you, and what are you doing in here?

TRAMP. Don't get hot, boss! The company here is so delightful that I had to join the assemblage. Let me contribute my share to pay for my presence among you.

ALL. Good! Good! Do something.

(*TRAMP'S specialty. All applaud and are delighted.*)

JAYBIRD. Fine! Splendid! You're too bright to be a tramp. How would you like to come and work on my farm?

TRAMP. Thanks! I'm too strong to work.

(*Enter CONSTABLE, L., in flat.*)

CONSTABLE. What's going on here?

SI. Just a little gathering for a good purpose.

CONSTABLE. I just dropped in to tell you that Neighbor Jaybird's chicken-coop has been robbed!

JAYBIRD. What!

CONSTABLE. Yes, sir. And that I followed the midnight assassin to this store, and now I've got him.

(*Seizes TRAMP, amid a general cry of astonishment.*)

TRAMP. I own up—I did purloin the poultry. Take me to jail.

JAYBIRD. No—no—you're too talented to go to jail. Mr. Constable, I forgive the chicken thief.

CONSTABLE. You're makin' a mistake, Reuben. You're encouragin' crime and confoundin' felony. An' say (*going close to JAYBIRD*), how kin I keep this here job if I don't arrest somebody once in a while—hey?

JAYBIRD. Can't help it. I'll give him a job as shuffer on my automobile. I guess I need one.

TRAMP. I'll take it.

(*CONSTABLE very angry, but all jolly him.*)

ALL. Be a good fellow. Forgive him and do something for the entertainment.

CONSTABLE. All right. I'll do a stunt.

(*CONSTABLE'S specialty, which should be of a rural character if possible.*)

TRAMP. Say, you're pretty good. Look here. I've got a proposition to make you.

(*Draws CONSTABLE out L. SI, LILLIE and HIRAM talk R.*)

JAYBIRD. Guess I'll go show him the machine.

(*Goes out L.*)

MRS. R. Oh, let me see it, too. (*Runs out L.*)

BELINDA. Well, of all the bold hussies!

TILLY. Do you mean me?

BELINDA. No, I don't, but I might.

(*They glare at each other.*)

HANK (*coming forward*). Well, speakin' o' war, I'll contribute a war piece to the entertainment. It goes this here way. (*Clears throat, ad lib., etc.*)

JOE (*going L.*). That settles it; I'm goin' home. I can't stand no more of Hank's war talk. (*Stops.*) Why, how d'ye do, Miss —

(*Enter MABEL DEERING, L.*)

MABEL. Oh, is this the post-office?

BELINDA. Yes, ma'am.

(*Walks around MABEL, inspecting her critically.*)

MABEL (*smiling*). You see, I'm a stranger—just a summer boarder, in fact, and I don't know much about the place yet.

(*Looks at LILLIE, who smiles to her pleasantly.*)

HIRAM (*going to MABEL and bowing*). Allow me to personally conduct you. My name is Plunkitt. (*As he talks he goes R., draws boxes forward and forms a double line of them—as in diagram—from down R. to up C., with one more in front, up C.*) The Cranberry Crossroads sight-seeing automobile! All aboard! Allow me!

MABEL (*laughing*). Oh, all right!

(*Gives HIRAM her hand, and he escorts her to a box.*)

HIRAM. Come on, everybody! See your own city! Come on!

(LILLIE, HANK, JOE, SI and BELINDA *laughingly take places in the "auto."*)

SI. Come on, Tilly!

TILLY (*sniffing*). I guess not. Some people is born plumb foolish, an' some never got over it.

HIRAM (*laughing*). Hey, where's the chauffeur? (*Goes L. and calls off.*) Here, Mr. Jaybird, I have a brand new auto for you. (*Enter JAYBIRD, L. HIRAM pushes him to box, C.*) You're the chauffeur for the rubber-neck wagon.

JAYBIRD. All right!

(*Pretends to crank up machine, then sits on box and pretends to steer. HIRAM takes sheet of paper from counter, and while he talks rolls it into megaphone shape.*)

HIRAM (C). Ladies—and—gen-tle-men! On the right (*waving megaphone R.*) we have the palatial em-po-ri-um and residence of Mr. Silas Slocum, one of our mer-chant prin-ces!

SI. You get out, Hiram!

(*All laugh.*)

HIRAM (*waving toward TILLY, who is in front of post-office boxes*). On the left you perceive a grand old ruin,

TILLY. What!

(*All laugh.*)

HIRAM (*calmly*). That is the post-office. (*All laugh at TILLY, who flounces around behind counter. HIRAM goes on to describe buildings, etc., in funny terms. This gives a fine opportunity for local hits. He should include some buildings the town needs, but which are not yet built, the building the entertainment is held in, etc. At the end he says.*) We have now arrived at our starting point, ladies—and—gentlemen. All change! One dollar each, please. Thank you. (*Pretends to collect money.*)

MABEL (*laughing*). Well, Mr. Plunkitt, I must say it's worth the money.

(HANK, SI and JOE pile boxes R.)

SI. You're all right, Hiram.

TILLY (*from behind post-office boxes*). Foolishness!

(LILLIE and MABEL converse up R. HIRAM and BELINDA down L.)

(Enter PROFESSOR CAMOMILE, L. Looks around near-sightedly.)

PROFESSOR. Dear me, I guess I'm in the wrong place.

(Goes L., nervously.)

TILLY (*catching him*). No, you ain't. Come here!

PROFESSOR. Suffragette meeting, ain't it? (*Goes L.*)

TILLY (*catching him*). No. Jest the usual post-office loafers, an' some others.

(HANK and JOE violently argue, R.)

PROFESSOR (*nervously*). Oh, all right. My wife told me not to go to any of them there suffragette meetings.

TILLY. Wouldn't do you no harm. Want your mail?

(Goes behind boxes, gets mail and hands it.)

PROFESSOR (*looking at it close to eyes*). I can't see who it's from.

TILLY. Well, I looked it over. 'Tain't no importance, I guess.

HANK. Here, I leave it to the Professor. (HANK and JOE approach PROFESSOR.) Now, you're a doctor, ain't you?

PROFESSOR (*brightening*). Yes, yes. Somebody's cow sick? All right. Lead me to the patient's bedroom, please.

HANK (*on one side of PROFESSOR*). If a cow swallowed a —

JOE (*on the other side*). A man!

PROFESSOR (*nervously*). What! If a cow swallowed a man?

HANK. No, no! If a cow —

JOE. You mean a man. If a man —

(BELINDA separates HANK and JOE from PROFESSOR.
They go R.)

BELINDA. Here, let him alone. Professor, we want you to do a stunt at the minister's benefit entertainment.

PROFESSOR. Oh, no! Oh, no! Really! Oh, no!

BELINDA. Why, I asked your wife, and she said she would.

PROFESSOR. Oh, did she? Oh, very well. Certainly. Oh, yes, yes. Quite so.

BELINDA. What shall it be, Professor?

PROFESSOR. Why, I'll take a—I mean I'll do a little stunt I learned at the hospital.

(PROFESSOR'S specialty. *As he pauses, SCHOOLGIRLS run in L. laughing and screaming. They surround BELINDA.*)

GIRLS. Oh, Miss Belinda! Let us be in the entertainment. We just heard about it.

BELINDA. Certainly. What can you do?

GIRLS. Oh, lots of things. Why, we drill, for one thing.

(*They take brooms and do a broom drill. At end all the others applaud, and, if stage is small, GIRLS run out L.*)

MABEL. Well, this is very pleasant. But, dear me, I must get my mail. Anything for Miss Mabel Sweetly?

(*Goes toward TILLY, L.*)

TILLY (*handing card*). Yes. I hope you can understand it. I couldn't.

MABEL (*reading card*). Oh, it's from Ezra Buttons. He's coming over from Elmville College to see me. How lovely. I wonder when — Why, here he is!

(*Enter MRS. R., L., with EZRA BUTTONS.*)

MRS. R. Ah, is this Miss Sweetly? Well, this young gentleman's looking for you.

(Smiles sweetly at EZRA.)

EZRA. Thank you. Hello, Mabel!

(Shakes hands with her.)

BELINDA *(to HIRAM)*. Anybody can tell that girl's just crazy after men. *(Goes to EZRA, simpering.)* How do you do?

EZRA *(politely)*. How do you do?

BELINDA *(sweetly)*. We're getting up a little entertainment to send our minister on a vacation. Will you help us?

EZRA. Sure! I'll bet the poor man will be glad to get away. What shall I do?

BELINDA *(very sweetly)*. Oh, anything.

EZRA. Well, I guess I could manage a college song, if Mabel will help.

MABEL. Oh, I'd love to! *(Specialty here by EZRA and MABEL, if desired.)* Ezra, let me introduce Mr. Plunkitt.

EZRA *(going toward HIRAM)*. How do you do? *(Stops, surprised.)* Why, you're Norval Norrington, aren't you?

HIRAM *(laughing)*. I guess you've got me!

LILLIE. What!

EZRA. Why, didn't you know it? I've seen him act often. He's known all over the country under his stage name—Norval Norrington. And he's a wonder. Glad to meet you, sir.

LILLIE. Norval Norrington! Why, I can't believe it!

(HIRAM draws her down C. EZRA and MABEL converse up C. BELINDA and SI down L. JAYBIRD and MRS. R. up L. HANK and JOE quarrel, R. TILLY leans over counter, talking to PROFESSOR.)

HIRAM. I ought to have told you at first, Lillie.

LILLIE. Then you're famous—and you're not poor at all, Hiram!

HIRAM *(taking her hands)*. No, I'm rich. For I have you, Lillie—haven't I?

LILLIE. Yes, Hiram.

BELINDA. Here, here! You brazen things! Holding hands! Well, I declare! What does this mean?

HIRAM. It means that Lillie and I will have another contribution to make to the minister's vacation fund.

BELINDA. What's that?

HIRAM. A wedding fee.

(He and LILLIE smile at each other. They go up c., followed by others laughing and congratulating them.)

MRS. R. and JAYBIRD, L. SI and BELINDA, R.)

MRS. R. *(sighing)*. That's all very pretty—but where do I come in?

JAYBIRD *(opening arms)*. Here's where you come in!

MRS. R. *(going to him)*. Oh, Reuben, you must sell that machine! I can't have you damaged.

SI. Say, they're all pairin' off, Belinda. How about us?

BELINDA *(embracing him)*. Well, I don't see why you waited so long, Si Slocum.

(HANK leads SLOWBOY down c. He holds pitcher, rubs eyes, and yawns. Everybody on.)

HANK. Hey, wake up! You don't know what's goin' on here in Cranberry Crossroads.

SLOWBOY *(yawning)*. Wh-what's the m-m-matter *(yawning)* with Cranberry *(yawning)* Crossroads, anyway?

HANK *(to others)*. He wants to know *(loudly)* what's the matter with Cranberry Crossroads!

ALL *(crowding around them)*. It's all right!

HANK. What's all right?

(SLOWBOY wakes up, grins, and joins in.)

ALL. Cranberry Crossroads!

HIRAM. And particularly Si Slocum's country store!

(Music, wedding march.)

CURTAIN



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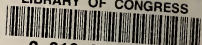
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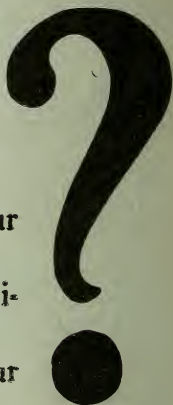
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